

CONGRESSWOMAN

Carolyn McCarthy

Health Care Accomplishments - 107th Congress

As a nurse, Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy has vast experience with the healthcare system. She is using her expertise to address the problems associated with today's healthcare by sponsoring and cosponsoring important and necessary legislation.

REDUCING THE NATIONAL NURSING SHORTAGE

Congresswoman McCarthy searches for innovative ways to attract nurses to the nursing profession, and turn the retention *problem* to a retention *solution*. McCarthy's Magnet Hospital legislation was incorporated into the Nurse Reinvestment Act, which the President signed into law on Thursday, August 1, 2002.

Nurse Retention Solutions became Public Law No: 107-205, **H.R. 3487, the Nurse Reinvestment Act**, which addresses the nursing shortage, affecting the quality of care patients receive in healthcare settings. This bill includes **H.R. 4654, Nurse Retention and Quality of Care Act**, Congresswoman McCarthy's legislation that awards grants to hospitals to attain magnet hospital status.

Magnet hospitals promote greater autonomy for nurses to act within their scope of professional practice, foster greater input from nurses at the executive level and to ensure their input into the decision making processes. Through these important changes, Magnet hospitals have shown increased retention of their nurses and are able to attract better trained and more effective nurses.

In addition this bill:

- √ Establishes Nurse Scholarships
- √ Establishes Comprehensive Geriatric Training Grants for Nurses
- √ Establishes Faculty Loan Cancellation Program
- √ Establishes Career Ladder Grant Program
- √ Educates the public about the need for more nurses and the opportunities available for those entering the nursing profession through a public service announcements.

REFORMING HMOS AND PROVIDING QUALITY CARE

Congresswoman McCarthy recognizes the need for healthcare reform, and is working to provide patients with the care they need and deserve.

- √ **H.R. 526, the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act**, also known as the Patient's Bill of Rights, which protects those enrolled in managed care plans and other coverage.
 - Requires health plans and insurers to offer patients more care options and greater access to patient information.
 - Restricts health plan and insurer interference in the doctor-patient relationship.
 - Provides tax credit for health insurance costs of small businesses.
 - Provides for prompt payment of claims from HMOs to hospitals and other healthcare providers.

H.R. 287, the Prompt Payment of Health Benefit Claims Act, is Congresswoman McCarthy's legislation to make sure Medicare+Choice plans, along with other HMOs, provide their beneficiaries with prompt payments once claims have been submitted.

- Requires insurance companies to make payments within 30 days of a clean claim.
- Requires HMOs provide written notices to the hospital or healthcare provider

- √ **H.R. 1556, American Hospital Preservation Act**, increases the amount of payment for inpatient hospital services under Medicare and freezes the reduction in payments to hospitals for indirect costs of medical education.

- √ **H.R. 4066, Mental Health Benefits bill**, provides for equal coverage of mental health benefits with respect to health insurance coverage unless comparable limitations are imposed on medical and surgical benefits

DEFEATING BREAST CANCER

Congresswoman McCarthy is a strong advocate for breast cancer prevention and treatment since the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer on Long Island is among the highest in the country. Furthermore, women on Long Island with breast cancer pay an average of 116% more for the five breast cancer drugs than drug companies' most favored customers, and 80% of women diagnosed with breast cancer are over the age of 55.

H.R. 758, the Breast Cancer Prescription Drug Fairness Act, is Congresswoman McCarthy's bill to reduce prescription drug prices for women diagnosed with breast cancer, along with seniors on Medicare.

- Allows Medicare recipients and women diagnosed with breast cancer to buy drugs at the discounted rate that drug companies charge the federal government.

- ✓ **H.R. 1723, the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act**, authorizes the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to make grants for the development and operation of research centers to study the relationship between environmental factors and the prevalence of breast cancer.
- ✓ **H.R. 536, the Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act**, requires health plans to provide coverage for a minimum hospital stay for mastectomies and lymph node dissections performed during breast cancer treatment.
- ✓ **H.R. 281, the Taxpayers' Cancer Research Funding Act**, adds to the Internal Revenue Code a checkoff box for a Breast and Prostate Cancer Research Fund.
- ✓ **H.R. 1354, the Assure Access to Mammography Act**, enhances reimbursement for, and expands capacity to mammography services under the Medicare program.
- ✓ **H.R. 1624, Access to Cancer Therapies Act**, extends Medicare coverage to all oral drugs prescribed for use as an anti-cancer agent for medically accepted indication
- ✓ **H.R. 3186, Paget's Cancer Awareness Act**, creates a study and an awareness program on Paget's Cancer, a rare form of breast cancer.
- ✓ **H.R. 2725, Breast Cancer Research Stamp Act**, reauthorizes the breast cancer research special postage stamp.
- ✓ **H.R. 3989, Better Screening Test for Women Act**, authorize additional appropriations to the National Institutes of Health for research on the early detection of and the reduction of mortality rates attributed to breast cancer.

PROTECTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Congresswoman McCarthy understands the concerns women have regarding their health, and she knows our children require special care. That is why she's working with her colleagues on a number of bills that directly address women's and children's healthcare needs.

H.R. 3014, the Diamond Blackfan Anemia Act, is Congresswoman McCarthy's legislation to increase research on a rare genetic bone marrow failure disorder which develops in infancy, with 10% being severely anemic at birth and 90% by the first 12 months .

- Encourages the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, in coordination with the Office of Rare Diseases, to examine the science of bone marrow deficiencies and do the necessary research.
- Asks NIH to aid the Registry of Diamond- Blackfan Anemia patients, which will help their understanding and discovery of the genetic links to cancers and other related illnesses.

- √ Passed **H.R. 717, the DMD Care Act**, expands and intensifies research on various forms of muscular dystrophy. Became Public Law 107-84.
- √ Passed **H.R. 2887, the Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act**, directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop an annual list of approved drugs for which there is an approved or pending new drug application, or where additional safety studies are needed. Became Public Law 107-109.
- √ **H.R. 600, the Family Opportunity Act**, provides families the opportunity to purchase Medicaid coverage for their disabled children.
- √ **H.R. 1111, Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act**, requires health plans to provide equitable coverage of prescription contraceptive drugs, devices and services.
- √ **H.R. 4032, Domestic Violence Screening and Treatment Act**, provide coverage for domestic violence screening and treatment under the maternal and child health block grant program, the Medicaid Program, and the Federal employees health benefits program.
- √ **H.R. 2063, Early Treatment for HIV Act of 2001**, gives states the option of providing Medicaid coverage for certain low income HIV infected individuals.

ADDING A PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT TO MEDICARE

Prescription drug costs are skyrocketing, and Medicare's minimal coverage leaves much to be desired. Congresswoman McCarthy has introduced legislation to ease this financial burden, and she has cosponsored several bills that reform Medicare by adding a prescription drug benefit.

- √ **H.R. 1400, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act**, calls for prescription drug price reductions for Medicare beneficiaries.

Generic drugs play a roll in containing the cost of prescription drugs. The introduction of a generic version of a prescription drug as soon as a patent expires provides the consumer a viable option to the name brand drug at a substantially reduced price. Generic drugs often enter the market at 25 - 35% less than the name brand, and typically sell at 50% or less than the brand name version of the drug after a few years.

H.R. 4998, The Pharmaceutical Fiscal Accountability Act of 2002, is Congresswoman McCarthy's bill that seeks to increase competition and lower prescription drug costs by removing barriers that prevents many generic drugs from coming to the market quicker.

- Reduces the 180 day exclusivity for generic drugs to 60 days
- Provide Research and Development Assistance for Small Biotech Firms
- Requires drug manufactures that receive grants from NIH to develop drugs pay 5% of successful drugs profits to NIH

✓ **H.R. 3317, the Medicare Drug Cost Savings Act**, amends Medicare to provide beneficiaries coverage for self-administered drugs that are used to replace previously covered drugs.

✓ **H.R. 828, the Senior's Health Care Choice Act**, expands coverage of preventive services and provides coverage of outpatient prescription drugs under Medicare.

REFORMING MEDICARE

When Congress passed the Balanced Budget Act in 1997 to give seniors more healthcare choices, they created the Medicare+Choice Program. Today, five years later, Nassau seniors are facing numerous problems with their Medicare coverage: increasing premiums, HMO pullouts from Nassau, and few choices. Congresswoman McCarthy is trying to fix the problems Nassau seniors endure through their enrollment in Medicare+Choice by contacting those involved from other branches of the government, and by cosponsoring several pieces of legislation.

✓ Congresswoman McCarthy met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson about the number of problems associated with the Medicare+Choice program.

She also supports the following legislation:

✓ **H.R. 145, the HMO Solvency Act**, assures the financial solvency of Medicare+Choice organizations in an attempt to prevent future premium increases and HMO pullouts.

✓ **H.R. 148, the Medicare HMO Improvement Act**, addresses the repercussions of HMO pullouts from Medicare+Choice, primarily the sudden disruption of Medicare beneficiary enrollment in Medicare+Choice plans.

✓ **H.R. 3391, the Medicare Regulatory and Contracting Reform Act**, helps Medicare beneficiaries understand and navigate the Medicare program and benefits.

✓ **H.R. 274, the Seniors Healthcare Bill of Rights**, provides HMOs with incentive payments for multi-year contracts under the Medicare+Choice program.

✓ **H.R. 2836, the Medicare+Choice Equity and Access Act**, fixes problems associated with reimbursements by providing Medicare+Choice organizations equitable

reimbursement rates.

- √ **H.R. 2980, the Medicare+Choice Stabilization and Improvement Act**, stabilizes and improves the Medicare+Choice program a variety of ways.
- √ **H.R. 3584, Medicare+Choice Improvement and Stabilization Act**, improves payments and regulations under the Medicare+Choice program.
- √ **H..R 3834, Medicare Access to Rehabilitation Services Act**, repeals the Medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps.

HELPING SENIORS WITH LONG-TERM CARE

Congresswoman McCarthy sees long-term care as a family issue. She is aware of the growing number of seniors needing long-term care, and the number of families who opt to care for them instead of putting their loved ones in a home. She wants to make sure adult children can care for their dependent parents. She is working to increase choices and coverage for long-term care, as well as tax credits for seniors and their families.

- ✓ Passed **HR 271**, which designated land for use as assisted living senior centers. Became Public Law 107-28.
- ✓ **H.R. 579, the Federal Family Health Coverage Act**, gives federal employees the option of obtaining health coverage for their dependent parents.
- ✓ **H.R. 3331, the Quality Care for Nursing Home Patients Act**, imposes certain staffing requirements for nursing facilities receiving payments under either Medicare or Medicaid.
- ✓ **H.R. 1490, the Homebound Clarification Act**, clearly defines the term “homebound” to clarify home health services coverage under Medicare.

MISCELLANEOUS HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Congresswoman McCarthy is a cosponsor of many pieces of healthcare legislation. For more information on these bills, please refer to <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

<i>Bill No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>
H.R. 2118	Lyme and Infectious Disease Information and Fairness in Treatment (LIIFT) Act	Establishes a Tick-Borne Disorders Advisory Committee.
H.R. 1862	Greater Access to Affordable Pharmaceuticals Act	Provides greater access to affordable pharmaceuticals.
H.R. 1682	Asthma Act	Gives the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education increased authority over asthma programs, and provides them with increased funding.
H.R. 1638	Medicare Geographic Reclassifications Equity Act	Provides that geographic reclassifications of hospitals from one urban area to another do not result in lower wage indexes in the urban area in which the hospital was originally classified.
H.R. 1254	Lyme Disease Initiative	Establishes a program to reduce the incidence and prevalence of Lyme disease.

<i>Bill No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>
H.R. 326	Ovarian Cancer Research and Information Amendments	Authorizes money for ovarian cancer research.
H.R. 602	Genetic Nondiscrimination in Health Insurance and Employment Act	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance.
H.Res. 87	Expand Access to Community Health Centers (REACH) Initiative	Calls for an increase in federal investment in programs that provide health care services to the uninsured.
H.R. 162	Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity Amendments	Prohibits health plans from imposing treatment limitations or financial requirements on mental health benefits or substance abuse and chemical dependency benefits, if similar limitations aren't placed on medical and surgical benefits.
H.R. 1143	Legal Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act	Gives States the option of covering legal immigrants under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).
H.R. 1520	Eliminate Colorectal Cancer Act	Requires health plans to cover colorectal cancer screenings.
H.R. 2063	Early Treatment for HIV Act	Gives States the option of providing Medicaid coverage to low-income individuals infected with HIV.
H.R. 2117	Medicare Medical Nutrition Therapy Amendment Act	Expands coverage of medical nutrition therapy services under Medicare for beneficiaries with Cardiovascular disease.
H.R. 2220	Medicare Dialysis Benefit Improvement Act	Provides for payment under Medicare for four hemodialysis treatments per week for certain patients.
H.R. 2629	Hematological Cancer Research Investment and Education Act	Expands, intensifies and coordinates blood cancer research, education and informational programs.
H.R. 1624	Access to Cancer Therapies Act	Extend Medicare coverage to all oral drugs prescribed as an anticancer agent for medically accepted conditions.
H.R. 3414	State Budget Relief Act	Temporarily increase the Federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) under Medicaid for FY02 to help states finance enrollment increases due to unemployment.

<i>Bill No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>
H.R. 3602	Certified Nurse Midwifery Medicare Services Act	Provides reimbursement for certified midwife services, and more equitable reimbursement rates for such services.
H.R. 3675	Improved Maternal and Children's Health Coverage Act	Improves coverage of needy children under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).
H.R. 4100	National Vaccine Authority Act	Establishes the National Vaccine Authority within the Department of Health and Human Services